

MINUTES OF THE COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

May 29, 2015

A regular meeting of the Commission for Human Rights was held on Friday, May 29, 2015. Present at the meeting were Commissioners John B. Susa, Chair, Camille Vella-Wilkinson, Angelyne E. Cooper, Esq. and Tolulope Kevin Olasanoye, Esq. Absent were Commissioners Iraida Williams, and Rochelle Bates Lee. The meeting commenced at 12:20 p.m. Commissioner Alberto Aponte Cardona, Esq. arrived at 1:10 pm.

Commissioner Vella-Wilkinson moved to approve the minutes of April 24, 2015. Commissioner Cooper seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Status Report of Michael D. Évora, Executive Director

A written report was handed out. All new information is in bold print.

Case Production Report – Attached

Aged Case Report – No aged cases to report.

Outreach Report – Attached

STATUS REPORT – COMMISSIONERS

OUTREACH: Commissioner Alberto Aponte Cardona has been nominated by the Governor to serve on the state Labor Relations Board. Commissioner Cardona has also accepted a position as the President of the Rhode Island Hispanic Bar Association.

Commissioner Vella-Wilkinson reported that the City of Warwick Police Department has promoted a female to the position of Major. This is Warwick's first female Major in the Police Department. Commissioner Vella-Wilkinson is also working on a project getting background information on memorials and military monuments in the City of Warwick. Commissioner Vella-Wilkinson testified at the state house on

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the VEMA Bill (Voting and Elections Modernizations Act) and wrote a resolution for Warwick in support . She also reported that the National

Commander for the Disabled American Veterans will speak in Rhode Island at the National Conference. The Commissioner will be a

speaker in her capacity as the liaison for the City of Warwick. The Commissioner is also participating in the selection for the Adjutant General of the RI National Guard. She also attended a meeting of the Religious Freedom Coalition.

GENERAL STATUS: There is no information on Commissioner Appointments.

STATUS REPORT – LEGAL COUNSEL: by Cynthia M. Hiatt and Francis Gaschen.

LITIGATION: Counsel and the Commissioners reviewed pending litigation in which the Commission has a role. Report attached.

LEGISLATION: Legal Counsel reported on pending bills relating to civil rights and the bills were discussed.

Resolution on Marriage Rights of Incarcerated Persons: As the ACLU has now brought suit on behalf of ACI inmate Mr. Cody Zab with respect to his marriage rights, the Commission will take no further action. Counsel will send a letter to Mr. Zab informing him of that.

HEARING SCHEDULE/STATUS OF HEARING CASES: Commission Counsel discussed with the Commissioners the hearing schedule.

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The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Commission is June 26, 2015 at 12:00 noon.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Michael D. Evora
Executive Director**

Notes taken by B. Ross

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S
REPORT TO COMMISSIONERS
29 May 2015**

I. BUDGET

S = State/General Revenue; F = Federal (EEOC/HUD); T = Total

	FY 2015	FY 2015	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2016
	(Enacted)	(Rev. Req)	(Revised)	(Req.)	(Gov. Rec.)
S	1,193,083	1,206,185	1,221,763	1,231,273	1,252,174
F	287,096	332,950	310,692	319,355	295,386
T	1,480,179	1,539,135	1,532,455	1,550,628	1,548,010

The Commission's FY15 (Revised) and FY16 (Requested) budget requests were submitted to the Governor, House/Senate Fiscal Advisors and Budget Office officials on September 12, 2014. See above for details.

The Governor has submitted her FY 2015 (Revised) and FY 2016 (Recommended) budgets for the Commission to the General Assembly. Details are noted above.

I submitted the Commission's FY15 Third Quarter report to the Budget Office on April 7. We project a deficit of approximately \$28,600 in General Revenue at the end of the fiscal year, primarily attributable to the unexpected Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increases for staff. The COLA deficit, however, is expected to be covered by the Governor's FY15 Revised Budget recommendation, which provides an increase in General Revenue to account for these increases.

The House Finance Subcommittee on General Government held a hearing on the Commission's FY15 (Revised) and FY16 (Recommended) budget proposals, Cynthia Hiatt attended the hearing in my absence, gave a brief overview of the Commission's accomplishments in FY14, and answered questions from Committee members.

Our Budget Analyst has advised that the State Budget Office will be sending an amendment to our FY15 budget to the House and Senate for consideration. The amendment would add \$10,010 to our general revenue in order to pay a recently-received bill from our landlord for our proportional share of real estate tax increases from 2011 to 2015.

II. FEDERAL CONTRACTS

EEOC – For federal FY12 (ending September 30, 2012), according to EEOC Project Director Marlene Toribio, we closed 237 co-filed cases.

Our contract with EEOC for FY12 was for 235 cases. For federal FY13 (ending September 30, 2013), we closed 201 co-filed cases. Our contract with EEOC for FY13 was for 199 cases. For federal FY14 (ending September 30, 2014), we closed 232 co-filed cases. Our modified contract for FY14 was for 230 cases. For federal FY15 (beginning October 1, 2014), we have closed 120 co-filed cases. EEOC has advised that our contract for federal FY15 is for 206 cases, but we have yet to receive the formal contract.

HUD – For FY13, we took in 51 new housing charges, all of which were co-filed with HUD, and we processed 50 cases, 47 of which were co-filed with HUD. For FY14, we took in 49 new housing charges, 47 of which were co-filed with HUD, and we processed 51 cases, 50 of which were co-filed with HUD (three of these processed cases were post-PC conciliations). For FY15 (beginning July 1, 2014), we have taken in 95 new housing charges, 64 of which are (or are expected to be) co-filed with HUD. (28 were not eligible for co-filing and three were deferred to HUD for investigation.) Within this same time period, we have processed 76 cases, 54 of which were co-filed with HUD; two of these processed cases were post-PC conciliations.

HUD PARTNERSHIP GRANTS – Because the LGBT/Domestic Violence Victims projects came in under budget, HUD agreed to permit us to use leftover grant funds to produce a general fair housing brochure, poster and Power Point presentation for use in outreaches going forward, and to conduct five fair housing outreaches throughout the state. A general fair housing poster and brochure have been drafted and approved by HUD. We now await word on the pending “military status” amendment to the state fair housing law before proceeding with translation, printing and distribution.

III. PERSONNEL – No new information.

IV. OUTREACH – Refer to attached report.

V. GENERAL STATUS

●Meetings with staff members – I continue to meet monthly with individual investigative staff members to monitor case production.

●Case Closures – Refer to attached report.

In FY11, we processed 422 cases; in FY12, we processed 411 cases (approx. 3.5% decrease). For FY13, we processed 389 cases (approx. 5% decrease from FY12). For FY14 (beginning July 1, 2013), we processed 376 cases (decrease of approx. 3% from FY13). For FY15 (beginning July 1, 2014), we have processed 334 cases (compare to 297 cases in this same time period in FY14).

●Aged Cases – There are no aged cases in the Commission's inventory for federal FY15 (beginning October 1, 2014).

●Overall Case Inventory – The Commission had over 1000 cases in its inventory at the end of FY 1998. We ended FY11 with 323 cases in inventory, FY12 with 255 cases, FY13 with 265 cases, and FY14 with 290 cases. As of 5/21/15, we had a total of 332 cases in inventory; 43 of these cases were pending assignment. All pending cases have since been assigned to investigative staff.

●HUD Onsite/Performance Assessment – HUD conducted an onsite visit on March 16 as part of its annual performance

assessment process. During the course of the on-site, the HUD officials interviewed me, Cynthia Hiatt, Frank Gaschen and Angie Lovegrove; they also conducted reviews of ten housing case files to assess compliance with HUD case-processing guidelines. We now await HUD's report/conclusions.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael D. Évora

Executive Director

Attachments